

THE SALIENT AND OTHER POEMS

T. A. GIRLING.

O Canada! O Canada!

O Canada! we stand on tall for thee.

SECOND EDITION

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1918

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THE SALIENT AND OTHER
POEMS



THE STATUE OF THE MADONNA, ALBERT CATHEDRAL,
AFTER BOMBARDMENTS. (*Page 14.*)

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THE SALIENT AND OTHER POEMS

By
T. A. GIRLING

SECOND EDITION, WITH
FOUR ADDITIONAL POEMS

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PREFACE

THESE poems were written by me in the forward area, with the Canadian Forces, except the first, which I wrote at Sewell. In this second edition are included four new poems written since the first edition, and I am adding a few notes which may lend interest to some.

T. A. GIRLING,
V.O., 4th C.I.B.

NOTES

1. MOUNT SIR DONALD.—Of that mountain in the Rockies.

2. DUMB HEROES.—The horses mentioned are all true cases that came under my care as V.O. of the 9th C.I.B.

3. MADONNA.—Written in a half-destroyed house at Albert, 1916.

4. THE TROUBLES OF A TRANSPORT OFFICER.—Written at the request of my friend, the then T.O. of the 3rd Can. Pioneer Battn.

5. THE VIGIL.—From the picture of Sir John Pettie, R.A.

6. THE BOND.—Written during the winter of 1916—17 in Acq.

7. AN IDYLL OF THE WAR.—Memories of a rest area before going to the Somme.

8. FAR AWAY.—Written after seeing one of our dead on the Vimy Ridge just after the show.

9. BLIGHTED. — Written when we were camped just behind La Targette, May, 1917.

10. THE FLOWERS OF THE WOOD.—Thoughts of an afternoon in the Bois de Boulogne, and the remark of a pretty French girl: "The flowers of the wood are sweeter than those we buy."

11. THE QUEEN'S GARDEN.—An episode in the Versailles garden.

12. THE BATTLE.—Written with the help of a sergeant from the P.P.C.L.I.'s, who went over at Vimy.

13. ANTOINETTE LEGRU.—A true story of a French girl who went back to see her home at Carency after we took Vimy.

14. THE SOLDIER'S HOME.—Written near St. Jean during the Passchendaele show.

15. PEACE ON EARTH.—Thoughts that came after my Christmas dinner with the 58th Battn. H.Q. in Cité St. Pierre, 1917.

16. THE SALIENT.—Written near St. Jean.

17. THE HORSE ALLOTTED TO "X", COMPANY.—Suggested by the then T.O., 21st C.I.B.

18. MOUNT ST. ELOI.—Written in our hut at Carency.

19. THE MUSIC AT THE FRONT.—Written at Monchiet. Incidents from—1. Near Ouderdam, 1916; 2. Albert, 1916; 3. Château de la Haye, 1917; 4. Albert, 1916; 5. Coming back from the Somme, 1916; 6. When we took over the line in front of Agnez, March, 1918.

20. THE MILITARY MEDAL.—A true story of a private who came across with us in the 9th C.M.R.R.

21. ASCENSION DAY.—Written of a friend with whom I shared a room at Bellacourt and learned to know well during the last days of his life.

22. FALLEN.—Written near Caix (Amiens Front) after seeing a Bosch plane shot down but flying for a few seconds upside down just over our heads.

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MOUNT SIR DONALD

THOU rear'st thy head, Sir Donald,
Above the Glacier white,
Above the mighty ranges
Of fair Columbia's height :
Thy rugged form, Sir Donald,
Thy naked crest on high,
In giant mould and feature bold
Defiant dim the sky.

No friendly woods, Sir Donald,
Shelter thy lonely height ;
The rain, the cold, the tempest,
Thou bear'st in unclothed might.
Low on thy sides, Sir Donald,
The humbled clouds drift by,
And on thy breast, a virgin guest,
The pure white snow doth lie.

The rising sun, Sir Donald,
With glory gilds thy crest,
And purple skies enshroud thee
At evening's hour of rest.
The coy pale moon, Sir Donald,
Hides shyly at thy side,
'Mid stars that light, like beacons bright,
Steadfast thou dost abide.

Thy head bows not, Sir Donald,
 Beneath the load of time :
No changes spoil thy greatness.
 No shadows dim thy prime.
High o'er the world, Sir Donald,
 Thou dwell'st in realms unknown,
Rocky and bare, serene and fair,
 Majestic, great, alone.

DUMB HEROES

THERE'S a D.S.O. for the Colonel,
A Military Cross for the Sub,
A Medal or two when we all get through,
And a bottle of wine with our grub.

There's a stripe of gold for the wounded,
A rest by the bright sea-shore,
And a service is read when we bury our
dead,
Then our country has one hero more.

But what of our poor dumb heroes,
That are sent without choice to the
fight,
That strain at the load on the shell-swept
road
As they take up the rations at night ?

They are shelling on Hell Fire corner,
Their shrapnel fast burst o'er the
square,
And the bullets drum as the transports
come
With the food for the soldiers there.

The halt till the shelling is over,
The rush through the line of fire,
The glaring light in the dead of night,
And the terrible sights in the mire.

It's the daily work of the horses,
And they answer the spur and rein,
With quickened breath 'mid the toll of
death
In the mud and the holes and the rain.

There's a fresh-healed wound on the
chestnut,
The black mare's neck has a mark,
The brown mule's new mate won't keep
the same gait,
As the one killed last night in the dark.

But they walk with the spirit of heroes,
They dare not for medals or cross,
But for duty alone, into perils unknown
They go, never counting their loss.

There's a swift, painless death for the
hopeless,
With a grave in a shell-hole or field,
There's a hospital base for the casualty
case,
And a vet. for those easily healed :

But there's never a shadow of glory,
A cheer or a speech in their praise,
As patient and true they carry us
through
With the limbers on shot-riven ways.

So here's to dumb heroes of Britain
Who serve her as nobly and true
As the best of her sons, 'mid the roar of
the guns,
And the best of her boys on the blue.

They are shell-shocked, they're bruised,
and they're broken,
They are wounded and torn as they
fall,
But they're true and they're brave to
the brink of the grave,
And in silence they're heroes—through
all.

Written near YPRES, 1916.

MADONNA

ALOFT the Virgin of the Earth,
O'er the cathedral dome,
Upheld the Saviour of the world
Towards the heavenly home ;
And smiling France looked up and
blessed
The hope of life to be,
The Virgin and the little babe,
God's immortality.

But when the cruel hand of war
Has wrecked her pictured shrine,
She stoops, the mother of the world,
In pitying form divine,
And holds outstretched o'er bleeding
France
The hope of hearts bowed down
That deeper peace and lasting love
A bloody war may crown.

O tortured souls, take now the babe
Within your homes to reign,
That there may grow diviner thoughts
Through days of toil and pain.
A little babe, a newborn France
Live purified by strife,—
The holy Virgin of the earth
Bows down to give you life.

ALBERT, *September*, 1916.

THE TROUBLES OF A TRANSPORT OFFICER

YES, everything's a worry
In the life of a T.O.,
There's always so much hurry,
So much rushing to and fro,
There's always something pressing,
Some extra work to do,
And you never get a blessing
Whatever you put through.
From morning until evening,
In rain, and cold, and shine,
It's worry, hurry, scurry
In the Transport line.

The Q.M. wants a limber,
The Colonel wants his horse,
We've got to haul more timber,
And the usual work of course,
Send three men to headquarters,
Two kits to catch the train,
A team for the Trench Mortars,
Report your strength again.
From early morn till evening,
And even while I dine,
It's worry, hurry, scurry
In the Transport line.

The horses all need shoeing,
The grey has kicked his mate,
The harness wants renewing,
And the men get up too late ;
The water cart is leaking,
The Sergeant's got the *grippe*,
The G.S. waggon's squeaking,
There are twenty mules to clip.
There's always something needed,
And all the trouble's mine,
It's worry, hurry, scurry
In the Transport line.

Though the bullets whistled by me,
And the whiz-bangs made me sweat,
In the trenches wet and slimy,
Yet I wish I was there yet,
For they didn't always chase me,
By runner, wire or 'phone,
Or come in rage to face me,
Or speak in injured tone ;
You're everybody's batman,
No work can you decline,
In the hurry, worry, scurry
Of the Transport line.

When this blessed war is over,
And I sit at home at ease,
I shall no more be a rover
With the Transport o'er the seas.

But the weather's most depressing,
And the whisky's getting low,
My cough gets more distressing,
So it's time for me to go ;
Here's another message coming,—
You can always tell the sign
Of the hurry, worry, scurry
In the Transport line.

THE VIGIL

THE dawn has come, the long dark night
is past,
And all the gloomy shadows fly away ;
My watch is o'er, I am a knight at last,
My soul is quickened with the breaking
day.

Yet sweet it is awhile to linger still
And ponder o'er the watches of the
night,
To test the chastened impulse of my will,
And know myself anew by morning
light.

Proud knelt I down at closing of the day,
My valour tested and my courage
known,
Before the altar glorious deeds I lay,
And claimed the guerdon for my
strength alone.

Yet with the creeping shadows of the
dark
Came gloomy doubts which once my
soul oppressed
With sometimes terror none but I could
mark,
And thoughts and deeds ignoble, not
confessed.

How in the battle fame I always sought,
And strove in hope of ransom, gold, or
power,
Eager for love of maiden fair I fought,
Or to revenge some evil bygone hour.

There in the hallowed stillness of the night
It seemed a paltry thing to strive and
slay,
To wound and maim for pleasure of the
fight,
For but the fleeting praises of a day.

What makes a knight more noble than a
squire ?
How better than the hirelings in his
train ?
Is not to all the selfish same desire ?—
They fight for power, or gold, for love,
or fame.

Then, as dejected hung my humble head,
Through the east window shone a
glorious star,
A low sweet light over the altar shed
And framed the cross with glory from
afar.

What glory this ? O Christ, Thou didst
atone,
Not in bright arms as lieth by my side,

But naked, wretched, wounded and
alone,
To save mankind wert crucified, and
died.

So wretched is my soul, so dead my pride,
Wouldst Thou too bid me take the
sword and mail ?
Can so I take the Cross on which Thou
died,
And in the battle o'er Thy foes
prevail ?

Then in the brightness of the rising star
I saw a glory higher than my own,
A wondrous purpose and a goal afar,
Leading me on to courage yet un-
known.

I kneel, Thy knight, O Lord, naked my
breast,
Clothed but in armour to defend Thy
right,
My sword shall strike, my lance shall lie
in rest
Only to conquer o'er Thy foemen's
might.

Thou diedst for me, my life is Thine to
take,
Come life, come death, I fight all fear
above

To conquer over darkness evils make,
And shed more glory on Thy dying
love.

My strength is Thine, O Christ, give me
the power
To conquer when I strike in manhood's
name,
But to forego the pride of victory's hour,
Nor fight for vengeance, gold, for
love, or fame.

What fame may come, the glory is not
mine,
But knighthood sanctified and blessed
by Thee,
What love, what gifts, so that Thy glory
shine,
I take and use them with humility.

The dawn has come, the glory lights my
face,
My body's weary but my soul is
blessed ;
I take my armour only in Thy grace
And fight for weal or woe Thy knight
confessed.

THE BOND

UP from the cheerless billets,
From trenches and listening post,
From huts, and dugouts, and gunpits,
From the hearts of a watching host,
In the dark drear night of danger,
When the soul can hide its pain,
Comes the striving, yearning, longing
For the love of a home again.

Like the misty veil of morning,
When the sun draws back the dew,
The pure, bright, quickened memories
Turn back to home anew.
From lonely hearts of Britain
The love that made them brave,
Returns to seek communion
With those it left to save.

Swift borne o'er the hungry waters,
Nor distance, nor time can pen,
From the longing call of their dear ones,
The love of a million men.
From husband, and father, and brother,
Companion, and lover, and son,
The love of a nation is passing
With the sound of the midnight gun.

In the treasured homes of Britain,
In cottage, and villa, and hall,
With glistening eyes of watching,
Is an answer to the call ;
And the truth, and patience of woman,
In the pain that she bears alone,
Gives back to the heart that seeks it
The love that is all its own.

They vaunt of the power to conquer
In the massed and heated guns,
But the matchless might of Britain
Abides in the hearts of her sons.
The hard, stern road of duty,
The unseen cloud above,
Are one in Britain's glory,
The conquering power of love.

21st January, 1917.

AN IDYLL OF THE WAR

HE came into the billet,
A captain worn with care,
For two weeks' rest from Ypres,
Then on,—he knew not where.
He greeted her so gently
And smiled through tired eyes,
When all that homely comfort
He saw with glad surprise.

She met him at the doorway
And gave him welcome true,
For she had two dear brothers
At Verdun, fighting too.
She watched his needs and tended
With willing cheerful face,
Her brown eyes shone with kindness,
Her lithe form moved with grace.

He rode a gallant charger,
Like Launcelot of old,
His nickel shone like silver,
His brass-work gleamed like gold.
A sergeant followed after,
A batman waited near,
He seemed so strong and forceful,
So free from pride or fear.

And she was young and merry,
And full of winsome ways,
Yet with a heart beneath them
That shone with ruby rays.
Her voice was softest music,
Her laugh was like the stream,
Her sadness a deep symphony,
Her pensiveness a dream.

He tried to learn their language,
And touch the thought that blends,
He told her of his country,
His work, his home, his friends.
She spoke in broken English,
And wondered oft and sighed,
And found in him a comrade
In whom she might confide.

They played at draughts together,
But lingered o'er the game
To talk of times and places,
And thoughts they'd had the same.
The long war was forgotten
In nature, flowers, and skies,
And poetry, and laughter ;
They walked in Paradise.

He came into the billet
With trouble on his brow,
The smile fled from her features,
She was the woman now.

She came and sat beside him,
He took her pretty hand,
And told her all his worry,—
He knew she'd understand.

She was a gentle French girl,
He needed help that day,
So is it any wonder
That love should show the way ?
His worries seem to vanish,
And just for five days' flight
She was his gentle Marie,
He was her khaki knight.

Then out into the darkness
He rode before the train,
And all night through his Marie
Was at his side again.
While lonely as a widow
She wept the whole night through,
For he was gone for ever,—
The first love that she knew.

Ah ! was it wasted pity ?
And was it broken troth ?
They loved without a future,
They kissed without an oath ;
Or were it Heaven-sent blessing
When exiled soldiers fight,
If every gentle Marie
Might find her khaki knight ?

FAR AWAY

WITH equipment strapped to my
shoulders,
And my rifle close to my hand,
My head stretched out to the ridgeward,
I wait here in No Man's land
'Mid the litter and lumber of battle
On the shell-churned clay of France,
Where the craters and crumbling trenches
Bear the signs of the hoped advance.

I wait while the barrage lengthens,
While the rifles crack on the hill,
Then the bombs explode in the dugouts
And the first-line trench grows still
'Mid the crash of the answering shrapnel,
Lit by signal flares of the Hun
As the final waves pass over
To the tat of the Lewis gun.

Out here in the rain and bluster,
Thick mud on my khaki form,
I wait through the long day's battle,
Through the night of the snow and the
storm,
Till the fighting surges forward,
And the No Man's land of the past
Is a place of quiet and shelter,
And reaches its peace at last.

I wait till the burying party
Shall find me here in the clay,
Shall loose the disc from my bosom
And take my poor trinkets away,
Then dig a grave to lay me
Away from this weary war,
And the shell-torn crest of Vimy
Shall cradle me evermore.

And then in the roll of honour,
Just one feeble flicker of fame
E'er I sink in the great oblivion,
Will be written my humble name ;
And the fighting will still press Eastward
To the victory close at hand,
But I shall be dreamlessly sleeping
In the quiet of No Man's land.

April, 1917.

BLIGHTED

A DAY in May,
Bright sunshine everywhere
And all the sweetness of returning
spring,
Horses upon the hillside grazing near,
The tents of happy men who laugh and
sing
For very joy of life and Nature's waken-
ing,
Dear flowers in woods and fields and
birds above
Carolling happy songs of spring and love,
Then suddenly a whistling, hurtling
through the air,
A crash—death and destruction, pain and
fear.

A moonlight night,
Sweet, fairy stars o'erhead,
Grey, hazy shadows over wood and vale,
The still, soft air a balmy peace has shed
O'er lines of drowsy horses, tents like
pale
Grey peaks where rest and sleep prevail,
So all the night breathes out in passion
deep
The tender care of Nature while they
sleep,—

Then suddenly a hurrying whirring in the
sky,—
A bomb shrieks down, a terrifying burst,
and peace must die.

A buoyant soul,
Warm, cherished by the spring,
To love for all creation in the glow
Of rapture that all Nature's beauties
bring,
And hold a part in that from which they
flow,
Spring air above, responding earth below ;
So holy seems the season in the heart,
No thought but love and joy can find a
part
Until on man and beast barbaric wounds
and death
Stifle with sudden blast the spring's
inspiring breath.

5th May, 1917.

THE FLOWERS OF THE WOOD

How sweet the flowers of the wood
Compared with those we buy,
Reared in a simple hardihood,
Yet delicate and shy.

From hiding-place of grass or fern
They peer into the world,
Or on the banks of rippling burn
Their petals are unfurled.

Their charm no crystal vase displays,
No artificial grace,
Nor decoration nor arrays
Attract you to the place.

They are not decked to catch the eye
And please the sensual taste
Of loitering idlers passing by,
Or those who seek in haste.

Untarnished by the casual hand,
For them no price you pay ;
They seek you not in garnished stand,
Nor tempt you to delay.

But if you wander in the wood
And breathe the perfumed air
With heart and purpose pure and good,
They're waiting for you there.

The daffodil will bow her head,
Anemones will smile,
Wild roses turn with blushes red,
And oxeyes stare awhile.

And you must humbly stoop and take
Their offering sweet and fair,
Only for love and beauty's sake
To keep and tend and wear.

Oh ! soil not with a wanton tone
The wood's fair gentle pride,
How quick they wilt among their own
If plucked and cast aside !

'Twere better buy a city rose
To make of it your toy,
Then hope when all its beauty goes
The price brings someone joy.

Yet if with tender care you should
Bear these dear flowers away,
The fragrant freshness of the wood
Will dwell with you alway.

May, 1916.

THE QUEEN'S GARDEN

HE wandered in the Garden
Of Marie Antoinette,
'Mid lawn and lake and fountain,
Green woods and rivulet,
Sculpture among the foliage,
And round the crystal pool,
Terrace and fern and flower,
Avenue dark and cool.

The garden whispered to him
Of France in bygone day,
When regal taste and reckless
Extravagance held sway.
By costly care and labour
Nature and art combine
To fashion 'mid the foliage
A symmetry—divine.

It needed but the phantoms
To bring to life the scene,
The king and all his courtiers,
The young and lovely queen,
Romance rewards the dreamer,
There in a sheltered bower
Reposed amid its beauty
The garden's fairest flower,

A single rose coquetted
Above her hat's broad brim,
A sweet white gown discovered
Beauty in form and limb,
There showed in all her costume
And gems she wore with ease,
A taste to match her beauty,
The means and power to please.

Perfect in her adorning,
How perfect was her face,
Her violet eyes rich shaded
By lash of gold brown lace,
Soft rounded flawless features,
Rose tinted ivory set,
Dream princess in the garden
Of Marie Antoinette.

He walked to where she rested
And touched his khaki cap,
Then asked a simple question
To bridge a dangerous gap,
For he who seeks life's fullness
And delves its wealth untold,
Against its hard conventions
At times must be o'er bold.

She turned with regal gesture
Of anger and surprise,
But melted when she fathomed
The homage in his eyes,

From cold enquiring wonder
Through interest let slip,
She broke to simple candour,
And sweet-toned comradeship.

She told him of the garden,
She knew each nook and bower,
She loved its stately grandeur,
Its wealth of tree and flower,
Yet loved with tempered ardour,
And moderately expressed,
As one who granted favour
In pleasing her behest.

He longed to see the garden
By moonbeam's mystic light,
White pathways through the grasses,
Lakes shine like silver bright,
Tall trees and noble statues
With shadowings grotesque,
She sighed, and smiling murmured
That it was "romanesque."

And so a short half-hour
Was quickly whiled away,
Then in a sumptuous motor
She smiled and passed away.
He sought no future meeting
Nor wished to know her name,
The freedom of the garden
To each appealed the same.

He wandered through the garden,
More beautiful it seemed,
For always was reflected
The face of which he dreamed.
Alone he lingered in it
And left it with regret,
For everywhere was mirrored
Sweet Marie Antoinette.

Yes, still she haunts her garden,
The Queen of all its grace,
And shows to seeking wand'ers
The beauty of her face.
'Mid Sculpture, lake and flower,
Fountains and monarchs tall,
The Queen of Beauty wanders,
The fairest of them all.

May, 1917.

THE BATTLE

THEY are packed in the fresh-made
trenches,
They have swallowed their ration of
rum,
And they wait for the final signal,
For the zero hour has come.
They are there in the order of battle,
With ground-sheet and haversack,
Cartridges, rations and water,
And a shovel slung over the back.
The bayonets are fixed on the rifles,
The gas-masks are at the alert,
The Mills' grenades are handy,
So they scramble up over the dirt, and
it's

Over the top to victory,
Over the top to pain,
Over the top where the H.E.'s drop
And the hissing bullets rain.
Stout hearts must keep them steady
And quiet their nerve-racked frames,
Yet they're willing and eager and ready
For the battle of iron and flames.

All the world seems flung into chaos,
Full of crashing and humming and glare,
Solid earth and poor mangled creatures
Leap suddenly high in the air.

There are flares of artillery signals,
Dense smoke-clouds and pillars of
flame,
But the long khaki line moves forward
With a valour no terrors can tame.
There's the short death-space to cover
Till they get to grips with the foe,
And the barrage is moving forward ;
So it's over the top they go.

Over the top to battle,
Over the top to kill,
Over the top as their comrades drop,
But they keep advancing still.
There's death in a hundred places
They must pass ere the goal is won,
But there's grim resolve in their faces
For the deadly work to be done.

There's no time for thoughts of the
future,
But all the good in their lives
Is pent in one swift memory
Of mother, and children, and wives.
Then on with a courage unmeasured
To face, as was ne'er met before,
The barbarous modern inventions
That substitute murder for war.

The pride and strength of the nation,
Free offered at liberty's call,
True sons of the heroes that built her,
Pass over to conquer or fall.

Over the top for freedom,
Over the top for right,
Over the top with never a stop
To the goal that is always in sight.
The vanguard of honour, life-giving,
Defenders of all we hold dear,
God guard them in dying and living,
Our bravest and best that pass here !
11th July, 1917.

ANTOINETTE LEGRU

BACK to her ruined village home,
Came Antoinette Legru,
With eager steps and shining eyes,
Along the way she knew.

Over the hill and down the road,
The well-loved valley through,
But there, a weird and mournful sight
Broke on her wondering view.

Where red-tiled roof and gardened cot,
Nestled 'mid hill and wode,
Where hall and spire had towered
above,
And trees had fringed the road,

A battered mass of broken walls,
And cellars gaping wide,
And trees all broken, scarred and dead,
Appeared on every side.

Upon the rise she saw the church
Where, in her childhood's day,
Her simple piety had taught
To go to Mass and pray.

A shapeless wreck, yet still in death
It tried its lore to tell,
For carven stone, and sacred sign,
Lay scattered where they fell.

And by the village cemetery
Where lay her kin who died,
Were wooden crosses grey and white,
A thousand side by side.

The near-by wood, with winding paths,
Where, in her happiest hours,
With her young lover by her side,
She gathered fruit and flowers,

Was nothing but a tangled heap
Of wire and stumps and poles,
With trenches dug among the roots
And ugly yawning holes.

And he for three long weary years
A captive with the foe,
Yearning for home, hungry for bread,
With spirit dying slow.

At last she reached her father's home,
A heap of jumbled stones,
And cast-off kit and sandbagged cave,
And dirt and tins and bones.

Mutely she gazed across the ground
Where once she used to play,
The courtyard and the orchard trees
Had vanished all away.

Will nothing give a welcome home
To Antoinette Legru ?
Is there no token of the past,
No hope to grow anew ?

Yes, there beside a broken wall,
Among destruction dread,
A Crimson Rose of days gone by,
Rears up its glorious head.

It speaks of roots too deeply set
For even war to slay,
That raise again as from the dead
The Love of yesterday.

She saw, and, kneeling, kissed the flower,
The beauteous living sign,
'Mid desolation all around,
Of something yet divine.

With dimming eyes and heaving breast
She tried some prayer to say,
Then flung herself upon the ground
And sobbed her grief away.

IN THE FIELD, 29th August, 1917.

THE SOLDIER'S HOME

A SECOND storey bedroom,
Or a camp-bed in a tent,
In time of peace was satisfact'ry found,
But the thing that gives a soldier
The best feeling of content
Is a cushy little hole beneath the ground.

A tent is quickly riddled,
And a house is blown to bits,
Ere the occupant has time to get away
From superfluous attention
Of the persevering Fritz,
In his usual consid'rate little way.

So to get your usual slumber
When located near the Front,
If the shelling and the bombing give you
qualms,
Don't consider ventilation,
Nor for driest quarters hunt,
But rest content and free from all alarms,

In a hole of proper deepness,
With some sandbags overhead,
Or the heaviest material you can find,
And lay your army blanket
On the damp earth for a bed,
Then scatter all your worries to the wind.

The shells may burst around you,
The bombs drop close enough
To awake you from the pleasantest of
dreams,
But the vital cause of worry
Is the chunky bits of stuff,
And they haven't learnt to burrow yet,
it seems.

The quarters of a general,
The soldier's "home, sweet home,"
When in the fighting area they are
found,
Is a six by six compartment
With the Mother Earth for dome,
Just a dinky little hole beneath the
ground.

25th October, 1917.

PEACE ON EARTH

THE Christmas snows have hidden
The ruined town and fosse
With heaven-sent whiteness bidden
To cover wreck and loss.
A silver moon is sailing
'Mid stars up in the height,
Quiet and peace prevailing
On this fair Christmas night.
This hour no sound of battle
Troubles the tranquil air,
No fierce machine-gun's rattle,
Shell burst or rocket flare.
A truce for Christmas meetings,
A peace for Christmas fare,
With warm and heartfelt greetings,
Is granted to us here.
And round the dugout table,
And in the trench before,
Each man as he is able
Utters this wish once more
To comrades tried in danger
And tested in the fire,
Or to the newcome stranger—
To all this one desire,
That Christmas next returning
May find us with our own
By the dear "home-fire" burning
For all and each alone.
Though how to heal the breaches
We may not understand,

The peace that Christmas teaches
May dwell in every land.
And out beyond the wire,
And East, and North, and South,
This one sincere desire
Is passed from every mouth.
The blessed Christmas season
Unites in mutual hope,
With neither fear nor treason,
All those within its scope.
Ah ! if a wish so fervent
Can rise from such a host,
All other thoughts subservient
To this they long for most,
E'en if no God in Heaven
Sent peace down to the earth,
Must not the spirit leaven
Awake it into birth ?
Though Nature's laws be broken,
And " deeds of shame " be wrought,
Unpardoned words be spoken,
And honour set at nought ;
Though hearts are hot with anger,
And others dead and cold,
While vengeance stirs from languor
The fiercest thoughts they hold,—
Yet this one planted treasure,
Within the hearts of all,
Shall swell with mighty measure
And conquer over all.

Christmas, 1917.

THE SALIENT

THEY come from Southern victories
Another tryst to keep,
They march along the well-known road
Where often through the night they trode
From Poperinghe to Ypres.

Down by the grim Asylum
And past the famed Cloth Hall,
Old ruins now, more battered still,
Chateau, cathedral, hall and mill,
All tottering to their fall.

Out past their old entrenchments
To posts just lately won,
And in the night they take their stand,
In concrete fort and shell-hole land,
Against the cowering Hun.

They march not in as strangers,
But those who bear the brief
To shed fresh glory on their sign,
Borne bravely in the fighting-line,
Canada's maple leaf.

The purpose of their coming
The graves of those shall speak
Who bore the first dread gas attack
And hurled the pressing foeman back
Or died at Zillebeke.

In Ypres' famous salient
They claim the right to share,
Whose most heroic deeds were done,
Most hardly wrested triumphs won,
Most losses suffered here.

And on the ridges forward
Canadian signals fly,
And in the lower land between,
Advancing through the fiery screen,
Canadian heroes die.

Yet forward, dauntless pressing,
The final goal assail,
And claim for Britain's Western sons
One more great victory 'mid the guns—
The heights of Passchendaele.

THE HORSE ALLOTTED TO X COMPANY

OH ! I am the Company's geegee,
The horse that belongs to the bunch,
The "Saddle him quick and lend me
your stick,
For I must get to Bruay for lunch."
They wobble and bump in the saddle,
They trot me o'er cobbles and flint ;
I'm theirs for a day, so we're off and
away
To the places of bubbles and glint.

Oh ! I'm the mechanical transport,
The thing that you race and you pound,
The way to get there, with a gallop and
cheer
When the turn for the joy-ride comes
round ;
The slave left in bonds at the shed-post,
Till the longest of beanoes must end ;
Then they jump on my back, and they
cheer the way back
By a spirited race with a friend.

Oh ! I am the syndicate *cheval*,
The creature that nobody owns,
A sub.'s for a day when a captain's away,
And the next day a series of loans.

I'm the pride of no horse-loving master,
The hero of no mess-room talk,
And if I go lame, why it's just a damned
shame,
For the Company jockeys must walk.

Oh ! I am the bane of the transport,
The horse that's a constant disgrace ;
The shoeing-smith swears, and the
Toc. O. declares
That I'll have to be sent to the base.
My feet are a hotbed of bruises,
My tendons are bulging with sprains,
My coat's always dry, my digestion's
awry,—
Just my " Company " heart still
remains.

MOUNT ST. ELOI

Twin towers crowned Mount St. Eloi,
Majestic side by side,
A landmark from the distance,
A monument of pride.
They gleamed through mist and shadow,
They caught the dying light,
And capped the hill with glory,
Twin towers of dazzling white.

Twin towers in all things equal
Stood forth, till they in war
The fury of bombardment
With equal grandeur bore,
As shrapnel hailed against them
And high explosives made
The very hill to tremble,
Wherein their strength was stayed.

Then side by side their splendour
Stooped to the bolts of hell,
As coping stone and pillar
Toppled and crashing fell.
Yet month by month, sore smitten,
They crowned the battered slope,
And flashed from suns of evening
Their signals white of hope.

Now that the foe is driven
Far from St. Eloi's hill,

They stand against the skyline
Broken but splendid still.
Though equal chance they breasted
And stood as twins before,
Yet war has laid the burden
On one to suffer more.
19th February, 1918.

THE MUSIC AT THE FRONT

I.

THE night was dark, there shone no star,
The road to Ypres was rough and far,
The draft had halted beside the road
And eased from their backs the heavy
load.

Out in the distance they saw the shine
Of the star-shells flung o'er the fighting
line,

While a shell droned in through the night
air calm,

To burst with a crash in a near-by farm.
They were fresh from their homes and
their hearts were sore,

'Twas their first close touch with the
actual war,

So they rested in silence, tired and
drear,

And felt the brave man's fear of fear.

Then there rose the strain of a near-by
band,

A tune well known in their native land,
And the memories bright of some other
day,

Enchanted their gloomy thoughts away.
So they laughed and whistled and gave a
cheer

As the music died on the home-filled air.

“Fall in—quick march!”—but the band
who knew,
Tuned up again for a proud adieu—
They swung in line with even pace,
With head erect and cheerful face;
No fear for men who sang that song
That stirred their hearts to march
along
To deeds of valour ever seen,
’Mid Britain’s “Soldiers of the Queen.”

II.

They were shelling the troops in the
town of Alber(t),
There were holes in the houses and bricks
in the air,
And the limbers must pass to the dumps
and the guns,
The battalions pass through there in spite
of the Huns.
But the nerves that are jerky don’t work
at their best,
And the H.E. explosions don’t give you
much rest,
When you never can tell where the next
one will be,
And each incoming whine seems directed
at ME.

Then six pipers went up on a little
incline,
They blew out their pipes and they
formed up in line,
They turned not a head and they heeded
no sound,
Save the tune of their pipes as they
proudly marched round—
While the airs of old Scotia resound
from the hill,
Let the German bombardment destroy
what it will,
It can never dishearten a spirit so free
As breathes in the “Bonnets of Bonnie
Dundee.”

III.

They were out at rest in the Chateau
grounds,
When the concert party made its rounds,
They cheered the box, laughed at the
fool,
As they smoked and lazed in the evening
cool.
Work and the war they all forget
In the comic song and the gay quartette,
Then a tenor voice, strong, sweet and
clear,
Sang out the words of a well-known air.

The laugh was quiet, the talking stayed,
As the angel of home passed over the
glade,
And the soldier hearts felt the aching
pain,
For the cherished love of their own again,
While the silence echoed the hearts of all,
“Thinking I hear you, thinking I hear
you call.”

IV.

They're marching to the trenches,
Up through the war-racked air,
Lit by the flaming cannon
And soaring Verey flare.
'Tis dark, and ere the sunrise
They make a new attack ;
They wonder when 'tis over
Who will be marching back,
For every trench that's captured,
The barrage takes its toll.
No training wards the bullets,
No courage finds the goal ;
So he who steps beside you,
Or he who leads before,
Yes, you who pace in silence,
May see the sun no more.
But suddenly there rises,
Shrill clear above the noise,

The fifes and drum up forward,
Sent on to cheer the boys.
And gloomy thoughts are banished,
As cheery voices blend
In laughter, loving chorus,
“ Who, who’s your lady friend ? ”

V.

Back from the trenches they come
again,
Who have waded through hell on the
shell-swept plain,
Who passed o’er the top ’mid the crash
and the whine,
Bombed, bayoneted, stuck it and held
the line.
A battalion strong they went o’er that
day,
But eighty are left to march away,
And a captain rides in the colonel’s place,
Yet they proudly march with a swinging
pace,
While the band in front strikes up a
song,
And they all join in as they march
along.
Their part is done, and they go to rest,
They have stood the strain and they did
their best,

And those that died, well, their work is
o'er,
While the wounded are safe on England's
shore.
So they sing, these men from death so
near,
Strange song, "Hail, hail, the gang's all
here,"
With a truth—as only they know how,
So "What the hell do we care now."

VI.

They stand on the brink of Eternity,
With a nation armed at their back,
Through suspended days and through
noisy nights,
As they wait for the massed attack.
The word is passed that the foe's advance
Must here be met and stayed,
So they stand alert through each burst
of fire,
And mark where the shells have
played.
As the turn comes round for the front
line tour,
The supports and reserve well know,
In the driving sweep of the dense grey
mass
The first line troops must go.

But they stand there fast without doubt
or fear,

In the trench—at the Vickers' gun,
By the eighteen-pounder masked and
mute,

And there's never a thought to shun
The challenge flung by the German
hordes

To the men from over the seas,
While the air that breathes of a nation's
soul

Floats up on the evening breeze.
Fear not, dear land, that owns no right
But truth and liberty,

O Canada ! O Canada !

O Canada ! we stand or fall for thee.

May, 1918.

THE MILITARY MEDAL

HE was a simple farmer lad
From far Saskatchewan,
Who left his all to do "his bit,"
Like every true-born man.

No martial bearing in his form,
No smartness in his dress,
Only a heart with duty filled,
And nature's nobleness.

They sent him with a draft to France,
I lost him for a year,
Then saw his figure walking through
A village in the rear.

He looked up with the same old smile,
Said he was out to rest ;
Then with surprise I pointed to
The ribbon on his breast.

"'Twas in the Somme," he said, "you
see,

They sent me in the line
As stretcher-bearer, and we were
To take the trench at nine.

"But just as we went o'er the top
A barrage made us fall,
And those that lived just tumbled back,
They hit my leg—that's all.

“And all were wounded in the trench,
And most of them were gone,
So, well, they gave me this because
I stayed and carried on.”

Picture the scene, the broken trench,
The shell-bursts overhead,
The iron hail still hissing 'mid
The wounded and the dead.

The groans of pain, the blood-soaked
mud,
The shell-wrecked, reeking ground,
The broken guns and scattered kits,
And dead men all around.

The panic that a man must feel
When he alone can stand,
While deadly foes and cruel death,
Are pressing close at hand.

Yet to his faithful heart there came
No thought of fear or flight,
Forgot his safety and his pain,
He worked with all his might

To bind the hideous wound and ease
The sufferer's throbbing head,
Soothe parching throats and separate
The living from the dead.

And can a bit of coloured silk
Or moulded metal tell
How valiantly he did his task,
How nobly and how well?

No martial deed of fighting fame,
On which bright glory shone,
Surpasses this—when all were down
He, wounded, carried on.

May, 1918.

ASCENSION DAY

IN MEMORY OF CAPT. B. E. NICHOLLS,
20TH CAN. INF. BATTN.

THERE'S springtime freshness in the air,
Bright Maytime verdure everywhere,
Sweet op'ning flowers far and near,
In France so far away.

The buttercups in hedgesides glow,
Dear singing birds flit to and fro,
White apple blossoms fall like snow,
In France so far away.

There's all that fills the soul with fire,
With noble purpose, pure desire,
For thoughts and actions better, higher,
In France so far away.

Yet he who felt the magic spell,
Who loved earth's waking hours so well,
But yesterday at duty fell,
In France so far away.

Mutely we mourned our comrade brave,
The bugles sounded o'er the grave,
The reverent last salute we gave,
In France so far away.

Then sadly as we passed away,
We heard the French civilians say
That this was glad Ascension Day,
In France so far away.

So did his spirit strong ascend
Through toilsome path and fearsome end,
With martyred hero souls to blend,
In Heaven not far away.

9th May, 1918.

FALLEN

I WONDER to see you flying there,
Upside down in the hostile air,
While above you soars your foe alert,
And below the machine-gun bullets spurt.

Does the world seem bright to your
passing soul,
As with dazing brain you attempt
control?

Does the hope still live to escape your
fate?

Or to land alive 'mid the foes you hate?

At dawn how proudly you leapt in air,
To soar aloft in your swift career,
The victor perhaps of a dozen fights,
So free and sure in the azure heights.

How bright was the sun, how clear was
the morn,

How eager the wings on which you were
borne,

How welcome the call from the far away,
To the twist and the plunge of the
frenzied fray.

'Mid the tat of the guns that you know
so well,

Like a wounded bird you fluttered and
fell,

And you fly for a moment in brave
despair,
Upside down in the hostile air.
You must crash and die, so young, so
brave,
Will your soul rise up from your exiled
grave,
And casting aside the victor's bond,
Seek out fresh foes in the great beyond ?
In the land you reach will a harp be
strung
For a hymn of hate in your native
tongue ?
Will the furnace burn with a fiercer glow
To torment the soul of your country's
foe ?
Or do pride and hate with the parting
breath
Change to peace and love through the
gates of death ?
And to suffering foes is the "cause"
made clear
When they crash to earth through the
hostile air ?

28th August, 1918.

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